A STATEMENT OF *FACTS*,

OCCASIONAL OF AND RELATIVE TO

THE LATE DISTURBANCES

AT THE

THEATRE-ROYAL, EDINBURGH,

BY

JAMES FENNELL.

Justum, et tenacem propositi virum,
Non civium ardor *prava* jubentium,
Non vultus instantis tyranni,
Mente quatit solida.

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M DCC LXXXVIII.

A

STATEMENT OF FACTS, &c.

EDINBURGH,
July 24th, 1788.

HAVING pledged myself to the PUBLIC, to lay before them an exact statement of the facts which occurred during the late unfortunate disturbances at the THEATRE-ROYAL in this city, and their consequent effects, I am induced at the same time to offer a few observations in vindication of my own conduct therein; which I the more willingly undertake, from a consciousness of the integrity of my cause, and from a full confidence of receiving from an impartial public, that justice which a prejudiced combination has denied to me.

When I was first induced to embark in a profession to which the earliest infancy had witnessed my attachment, my fond imagination pointed out to me this country as likely to be the most favourable to my youthful endeavours. I fancied the laws of hospitality, and that kind indulgence so seldom refused to strangers, would insure me protection, assist me in my desires to please, and foster any feeble abilities I might hope to possess.------Little did I imagine, that where I sought an asylum, I was to find persecution and oppression;---that where I meant to give no offence, I was to be injured and insulted: but less did I expect, that, while enjoying, and apparently flourishing under the sunshine of public approbation, the worm was gnawing at the root:

my constant care had preserved me from the attacks of open enemies; but against secret malevolence, even virtue has no protector. I have been wounded in the tenderest point, and too much injured to admit an idea of returning to a profession, in which the most rigid conduct could not shelter me from insults I am totally incapable of submitting to.

On the evening of the 8th of July, the day preceding the performance of *Venice Preserv'd*, Mr. Jackson put into my hands the following letter, which he had received that morning by the penny post, evidently written in a disguised hand:-----

'Sir,

'If the parts of Jaffier and 'Pierre are not differently cast be-

'fore to-morrow, the Play will not
'be allowed to go on. It is un-
'pardonable in a Manager, to
'thrust a fellow into a part which
'he must be sensible he is totally in-
'capable of performing.

'THE PUBLIC.'

THE above letter being anonymous, could have excited in me no emotions but of contempt, even had not the illiberality of the stile exempted it from a possibility of receiving credit for its assumed signature: its threats, therefore, were considered only as the malevolent insinuations, to which every public character is subject, of secret and undeserved enemies: it pained me for a moment; but would in future have been totally unnoticed, had not the cruel necessity of referring to it occurred.

On the following evening, I came forward in the performance of my duty, and was proceeding in it, when I heard several hisses, and the cry of 'off, off!' from some part of the pit. A reception so unusual and distressing, while it redoubled the applause from every other part of the house, naturally led me to consider what could be the cause of it. Instantly the anonymous letter flashed on my remembrance: nor was I long before I concluded, that the hissing must have proceeded from the authors of it; recovering, therefore, from my embarrassment, during which the kind indulgence of almost the whole audience had supportedme, I advanced, to discover, if possible, amongst whom the disapprobation prevailed, suffering most severely, while receiving injuries which I

was unconscious of ever having deserved.

SEVERAL gentlemen having called out, 'hear him, hear him!' a silence gradually ensued; upon which I thus addressed the audience:

'IT would be but affectation in 'me to pretend ignorance of the 'cause of this partial disapproba-'tion; but I should------

HERE I was interrupted by several hisses from the pit; which being immediately drowned by the louder and almost universal marks of applause, I changed my intended address to the audience in general, and, referring only to the author of the letter, and his abettors, who I was naturally led to imagine were my

persecutors, endeavouring to put their threats in execution,---I said,

'I cannot wonder that some per-
'sons are averse to my addressing
'the audience, when they must be
'conscious, that from my speaking, a
'scene of villany will be revealed, in
'which I fear they may find them-
'selves but too deeply interested."

HERE an apparently universal approbation followed; after which I resumed my former address to the audience in general, in which I had been interrupted, proceeding---'But
'I should deem myself worthy of
'general censure, were I not at all
'times, and even at this present un-
'guarded and unprepared moment,
'equal to meet and to confute any
'accusation that can be adduced

'against me, either regarding my 'conduct as an actor, or as a man.' ---Here several gentlemen exclaimed, 'I'm sure of it!' 'I'll answer for 'you!' 'I know you can!'---Silence having again prevailed, and no one appearing to accuse me, I rejoined, 'It may have been imagined by some, 'and which I believe is the cause of 'this disquiet, that the part of Jaf-'fier has been taken from Mr. 'Woods. I have to assure the pub-'lic, upon my honour, that by a 'gentleman of this theatre (Mr. 'Bland *sen.*) who was kind enough 'to deliver the message, Mr. Woods 'was offered six weeks ago the part 'of Jaffier; Mr. Bland being autho-'rised by me to say, that with the 'permission of the manager, if more 'agreeable to Mr. Woods, I would 'undertake the part of Pierre. The

'reply delivered to me by Mr. Bland,
'was verbally this: "Mr. Fennell
"never would have offered me the
"part of Jaffier, had he not thought
"he could have made a better part
"of Pierre."

HERE Mr. Woods appeared upon the stage; and after the tumult had again subsided, during which several persons cried out, 'Hear Mr. Woods!' he thus began:

'I should not thus, uncalled for,
'have obtruded myself upon the au-
'dience, had it not been to set that
'gentleman right in one particular;
'and I can assure the public, upon
'*my* honour, that the part of Jaffier
'was never offered to me officially,
'but mentioned casually by Mr.
'Bland in the course of common
'conversation.'

He then added,---What Mr. Fen-
'nell alludes to by a scene of villany,
'I am totally at a loss to conceive;
'but I can assure the public, that a
'respectable, a very respectable per-
'sonage, called at my house last
'night, to acquaint me with the in-
'tended disturbance. I was not at
'home; but Mrs. Woods, who knew
'my sentiments, assured him that
'nothing could be more painful to
'me, than to be the cause of any
'public disquiet.'

Here followed great marks of ap-
plause, and I withdrew to the back
part of the stage, when, after some
altercation in the front of the House,
the manager was called for, and ap-
peared.---

Manager. 'I must confess I cast
'the parts originally according to the

'best of my judgment; but this day
'se'nnight, I offered, *officially*, the
'part of Jaffier to Mr. Woods.'

Mr. Woods. 'You did so, Sir.'

Manager. 'Telling him at the
'same time, that Mr. Fennell had
'always declared a preference in
'favour of Pierre; to which Mr.
'Woods replied, that he would ra-
'ther perform Pierre.'

Mr. Woods. 'Mr. Jackson certainly
'offered me the part of Jaffier; but
'as I then had studied Pierre, how-
'ever happy I might have been on
'this occasion to have performed
'Jaffier, I did not think a week
'sufficient time to recover it.'

Manager. 'What Mr. Fennell al-
'luded to by a scene of villany, I
'imagine to be this letter.' Upon
which I advanced, and having ask-
ed and obtained permission of the

audience, was preparing to read it, when a person from the pit cried out, 'Let Mr. Woods read it!' I felt myself hurt, but said nothing; while others immediately exclaimed, 'Read it yourself!' 'Let Mr. Fen-'nell read it!' I was proceeding, when another voice called out, 'Then read the *words!*' This cruel attack on my veracity was felt too sensibly for concealment. I advanced to that part of the pit from whence the voice issued, and demanded, 'Who dares imagine I 'would not?' The approbation of almost the whole audience was testified on this reply, by the most loud and lengthened applause: during which, somebody near me said something about *duty* to the public; to which I answered, 'I know, and 'will always practise, my duty to

'the public, but will not suffer my-
'self to be insulted by any indivi-
'dual.' After which I read the let-
ter, and then said, 'I now appeal
'to this public, before whom I had
'the honour to perform this part
'last summer; and to the audience
'of London, which also must be
'allowed to be a judicious one, from
'whom I received the most flatter-
'ing marks of approbation; to both
'I appeal, in contradiction to the au-
'thors of this letter, whether or not
'I am totally incapable of perform-
'ing the part I have undertaken?'

HERE the applause was such as convinced me, that I was attempting the part of Jaffier with the approbation of the *public*, however discontented some few individuals might appear.

Upon this I requested the permission of the audience to retire for a few minutes; which being obligingly granted, I withdrew.

On the next day, Thursday 10th, I received the following letter:

'Sir,

'You will please be informed, 'that you was permitted by *Us* to 'perform *Jaffier* last night, not upon 'account of your own merit, or of 'your behaviour, which was assuming to a very great degree, but 'merely out of regard to Mrs. Siddons, and that the Company might 'not be disappointed in seeing her 'Belvidera.'

'We declare we have for you no 'enmity whatever. On the contrary, 'we esteem you as a young and rising

'Performer. But we cannot with in-
'difference see you unduly prefer'd
'to parts which have been long and
'most worthily in the possession of
'Mr. Woods, who is every way inti-
'tled to our favour, and whose well
'known merit WE will protect, in
'defiance of the *malice* or arbitrary
'will of a Manager, who, having no
'merit as a Player himself, seems to
'be incapable of distinguishing it in
'others.

'ALTHOUGH we regard you much,
'yet we, as independent judges, can-
'not allow *any Player* to dictate to *us*,
'or to force himself upon *us*, because,
'as he alleges, he was well receiv'd
'in the part elsewhere. Reflect upon
'this; and if so, we will not again
'see you in the distressing situation

'of last night. Regard the admoni-
'tions, and gain the approbation of

'THE PUBLIC.

'EDINBURGH,
'10 *July*, 1788.'

SOME time after I received the following, of no date:

'SIR, by g--d

'if you Take any more,
'of Mr. Woods Parts, you wold bet-
'ter not be in Edin^r, for by him that
'made you a gentelman as you Call
'yourself, I, will Brick every Bone
'in your Bodey, & use you like a
'Scounderll, as you are, and in the
'Men time

'I am yours

'A GENTELMAN.

'I should have a
'made Appolgay for
'the Peppr and writing
'but any thing is good
'anuaf for a Villin.

MR. JACKSON received the following :---

EDINBURGH,
10th *July*, 1788.

'SIR,

'You must be sensible your re-
'cent conduct as Manager, has given
'much dissatisfaction; and you may
'be assured, that nothing but re-
'spect to Mrs. Siddons could have
'procured a tolerance for last night's
'performance. Be not, therefore, rash
'enough again to try the experiment;
'as we solemnly declare, we will not
'suffer your ignorance or ill-will to
'force upon us abilities at best
'doubtful, in place of those which
'we have so often witnessed with
'universal applause. If any such
'attempt is made in future, dread
'the vengeance of

'THE PUBLIC.'

'SIR,

'LAST night began what I 'suspect will not end much to your 'credit, and, I am sure, still less to 'your profit. You gave a character, 'in which it is well known by every 'judge that Mr. Woods excels, to a 'Gentleman who, excepting in a very 'few places, did nothing but puff 'it away with mere ranting. To 'make a man act a second part to so 'weak a hand, who has long and de-'servedly been considered in a dif-'ferent light, is an insult to the 'Public. Besides, there are sur-'mises of a different kind, and still 'worse. But be assured from the 'author of this letter, who is equally 'unacquainted with all of you but 'from your merits, that the next time 'such a preference is given, or sup-

'posed to be given, the Play will be
'stopped, and you and your fa-
'vourites hissed from the Theatre.

'CANDIDUS.

'Thursday morning.

P. S. By every means that are pro-
'per, encourage a young man,
'but never to the prejudice of
'older and better actors.'

I SHOULD not have noticed the foregoing letters (which I confess I am ashamed of doing) had it not been to justify myself in the idea I have of the party as it was originally formed, and to prove upon what slight pretences a persecution began, which was supported by misrepresentations, and ended in the total oppression of a character to whom no one could advance and say,---you have done me wrong.

On Saturday the 12th instant, in consequence of the above letters, and the accounts I had gathered from report of the intentions of the adverse party, I had prepared, and meant to have spoken, if called upon, the following address, which, as I shall hereafter have occasion to refer to it, I beg leave to insert.------

'Ladies and Gentlemen,

'I must confess, that after having 'received the universal approbation 'of the audience to my conduct on 'Wednesday evening, when I was 'informed, that upon a severe exa-'mination of what I had said when 'called upon at an unguarded and 'unprepared moment, it was found, 'that my words might be so twisted 'from my original meaning, as to 'imply my disrespect to the audi-

'ence, I most sensibly felt it. That
'I should be thought capable of such
'black ingratitude to a public, to
'which I submitted the exertion of
'my abilities, and from which I had
'ever received, and was daily re-
'ceiving, the most obliging at-
'tention and applause, was a
'shock too powerful not to excite
'the most piercing sensations of
'sorrow and regret.

'But when I afterwards was in-
'formed, that it was to be adduced
'to me, that I had absolutely insulted
'the audience, and was to be called
'upon to apologize for that insult, I
'regarded the impossibility of it in
'so strong a light, that any confu-
'tation appeared totally unnecessary,
'and any apology incompatible with
'propriety. My sentiments on that

'disagreeable occasion, were such as
'I have at this moment, and such as
'at any moment I would scorn to
'repress; but lest, from the unpre-
'pared and confused stile in which
'they were delivered, any misrepre-
'sentations or misconceptions of my
'conduct may have crept abroad, I
'think it a duty I owe to the public,
'and myself, to obviate them all;
'and I here publicly declare, that I
'have always cherished, and must
'ever feel, the highest respect for the
'audience of Edinburgh, and that
'nothing could be more distant from
'my intentions, than to shew to them
'the least appearance of *disrespect*.

'I flatter myself, therefore, that I
'stand perfectly acquitted in the eyes
'and hearts of the whole audience;
'and that in obtaining their acquit-
'tal, I have not forfeited my title to

'their esteem, by having acted in any 'way derogatory to my character as a 'gentleman and a man of honour.'

On Saturday the 12th instant, previous to the performance of Isabella, the manager was called for, and informed that I was desired to appear on the stage. This Mr. Jackson immediately communicated to me; in consequence of which I came forward, and after the tumult which a mixture of hissing and applause occasioned, had subsided, I said,

'With the greatest respect for this 'audience, I now advance, to be in-'formed why I am called before you.'

Some persons exclaimed 'for an 'apology,' when there was immediately an almost universal cry of 'no 'apology!' together with the loudest

applause: however, as the hissing still continued, I replied, 'an apology for 'what?' many gentlemen instantly exclaimed, 'for nothing' 'you have 'done nothing wrong.' 'you have 'never offended.' To which almost the whole audience gave their sanction: during which a person near me called out, 'account for the scene of 'villany!' to which I replied, 'is it 'the author of it that calls upon me?' the tumult having again subsided, I advanced and said,

'Have I any accuser?'

NO ONE APPEARED!

OBSERVING which, after a short pause, I added,

'As it seems to be the prevailing 'opinion of this audience that I 'have committed no offence, I can-'not think of making any apology.'

THIS being received by the strongest marks of satisfaction and support, in gratitude to that public which had so liberally protected me, I once more advanced, and added :

'It has given me the most painful 'concern, in having been thought 'capable of intending the least dis-'respect to an audience from which I 'have at all times received the most 'flattering and engaging marks of 'attention and applause:' here the approbation was loud, general, and lasting: upon which I withdrew, imagining that I had acquitted myself to the satisfaction of the whole house; and I had every reason to be confirmed in my opinion, when, returning to the stage in the performance of my part, I was received by the loudest acclamations and huzzas.

On the Monday following, when I had hoped every disquiet had been concluded, I was surprised to find that a more formidable party had assembled, consisting chiefly of the younger branches of the law; ill-founded reports had been circulated; my conduct had been misrepresented; and combinations had been formed, determined to carry by force, what they had before failed in by justice; different meetings had been appointed, from whence they sallied forth to the destruction of the fortitude of a single man, whose conscious innocence, and the support of the public, had prevented him from making concessions which would have disgraced him.

Upon my coming forward to speak the prologue to the *Italian*

Lover, I was consequently received by the hisses and catcalls of their stationed parties in the pit; while I was supported, if not by an equal number there, by almost every individual in the boxes, and other parts of the house. In this cruel situation I remained for more than half an hour, making frequent attempts to speak the prologue, which was immediately impeded by the hisses of the adverse party, who were frequently called upon to adduce the cause of their creating the disturbance; which no one being willing or able to advance, the PUBLIC insisted that the performance should be no longer delayed. Still there was a cry of 'off, off!' upon which I said, 'if any gentleman will stand 'forward, and be answerable for the 'consequences, I will withdraw:'

being extremely desirous of procuring the public peace by discovering the authors of the conspiracy, hoping thereby to obtain the knowledge of, and at once to obviate the cause of it, which I was convinced must have originated in impropriety: still no one appeared; upon which I added, 'if they who are concerned in 'it are ashamed of their cause, I en-'treat that they will drop it, and 'suffer me to proceed in my duty; 'but if not, let some one stand forth 'and support it.' Still they hissed, but no person would stand forth; when the dispute becoming more violent, several blows were received on either side: upon which many gentlemen leaped from the boxes into the pit, which was quickly restored to some degree of tranquillity. When the tumult had subsided, during

which I felt all the agonies a feeling heart is capable of, one of the party, which was inimical to me, stood forward, and put some questions to me I could not distinctly hear. I asked him if he stood forward as the author of this conspiracy, or was concerned in it? he denied both, but professed that he stood up to express the intentions of my adversaries, which were to demand an apology. How just, how generous was such a demand, after my having been twice acquitted by the public, of committing the offence for which the apology was demanded! I, however, replied, 'that even admitting that any 'unguarded expression had offended 'the audience on Wednesday last, it 'would be an additional insult to 'them, and a great disrespect to their 'decision, and that of the audience

'on Saturday last, to make an apo-
'logy at this time for any words that
'may have dropped from me in their
'presence, which they did not think
'proper to call me to an account
'for, and which apology I had been
'supported in refusing, as unne-
'cessary, on Saturday last.'

'UPON which the gentleman re-sumed his oration, assuring me, that although I had been acquitted and supported by the audience, that audience was not the public; that the gentlemen resident, alluding I imagine to the profession of the law, only were to be considered as the public, who having thought themselves affronted, insisted upon an apology: he was then proceeding in the assertion of a circumstance which he had misconceived, *viz.* that I had confessed having in-

sulted the audience; when he was stopped by the cry of 'no, no!' and suffered to speak no more.

I was then called for to repeat what I had said on Saturday, which, as nearly as my recollection would admit of, I did. After which, Sir John Dalrymple stood forward, and thus addressed me:---'Mr. Fennell, I 'am your friend, and sit amongst 'those who are your friends: The 'expression 'villany,' which you 'made use of on Wednesday last, 'was a rash one, but excusable in 'one whose mind was hurt, and who 'was conscious of being a gentleman. 'However, I give you my advice to 'make some slight concessions to 'that part of the audience who have 'taken offence, who will overlook 'what is past, and the play will be 'suffered to go on.'

To which I replied, 'I never in-
'tended to offend the audience; the
'term *villany* was addressed only to
'the authors of the anonymous letter
'I had received;' still there was a great disturbance: the confusion having been so great, few persons had heard what I had said; when, after enquiring amongst themselves concerning it, a gentleman begged that I would answer one question, which ought to, and probably would, satisfy the displeased part of the audience.

SILENCE being obtained, he thus addressed me:

'MR. FENNELL,

'WHEN you made use of the
'term 'a scene of villany,' it was
'addressed to the author of the ano-
'nymous letter, and his abettors,
'and to them only, and not to the

'audience in general, was it not?' To which I replied, 'undoubtedly:' upon which many of the *opposite* party exclaimed immediately, 'enough, 'Mr. Fennell: you have said enough; 'huzza Mr. Fennell;' and a general applause ensued.

I then spoke the prologue; and again from the applause I received, imagined that I had said every thing a man could say, and ought to have said, and had perfectly satisfied every opponent.

But, on the following day, I was informed that there was a paper signed in the Parliament-House, by the Solicitor, the Dean of Faculty, and many gentlemen of the law, insisting upon the most ample apology for my conduct, or being dismissed from the theatre. I went to the Par-

liament Square; but could hear nothing of it. I took the liberty of waiting on the Lord Advocate, wishing to be heard before such violent steps were taken: with his Lordship I found the Solicitor, to whom I mentioned every circumstance that had occurred, and the address I intended to have spoken on Saturday, had the confusion permitted me. When I had stated my case to his Lordship and the Solicitor, the Solicitor confessed that he had heard a quite different statement that morning. Conscious of my own integrity, I was convinced it could be misrepresentations alone that could have procured me such respectable enemies. I was waiting next morning for a gentleman in the library of the Parliament House, when I was called in before a committee, consisting of the

Lord Advocate, the Solicitor, and several gentlemen of the law whom I did not know. To them I read, having it by accident in my pocket, the address I mentioned the day before to the Solicitor. It was agreed that that address would have answered on Saturday, but would not then; and after much conversation, when they found me resolved to make no farther concessions, the committee was dissolved. In a few hours after, Mr. Jackson shewed me the following letter, signed by the Solicitor, the Dean of Faculty, and a number of advocates and writers; but, as I am credibly inform'd (I cannot say it from my own knowledge, having been refused the sight of the list of names), signed by no one gentleman independent of the law. The names annexed to the

paper, were about one hundred and thirty.

EDINBURGH,
15th *July*, 1788.

'SIR,

'WE are of opinion that Mr. 'Fennell's late deportment to the 'Public, and your conduct as Ma- 'nager with regard to that matter, 'require a very ample apology from 'both, testifying your deep regret for 'having failed in the respect due to 'them; and that if Mr. Fennell re- 'fuses to make such an apology, you 'ought immediately to dismiss him. 'And we take this method of inti- 'mating to you, that if this opinion 'is not complied with, either by 'making the apology suggested on 'Wednesday evening, or dismissing 'Mr. Fennell, that neither we, nor 'our families, will henceforth fre- 'quent your theatre, or shew you

'any countenance as Manager; ex-
'cept that, from our high regard to
'Mrs. Siddons, we shall postpone
'executing our resolution till her
'engagement expires.'

I need not descant on the injustice of the above epistle; but the last sentence of it cannot be suffered to remain unnoticed. The extreme delicacy of the sentiment with regard to my situation, and disinterestedness to their own, claim from me such tributes of gratitude, that, to pass over it in silence, would argue an insensibility I never wish to be thought capable of. To be endured on the stage, out of their professed regard to another, however amiable, must undoubtedly, to a man of feeling, afford the highest satisfaction; and to remain in a situation where he

ceases to be respected, must be, to a man of honour, the height of happiness.

I have now laid before the public what I believe to be a just and impartial recital of *Facts*: with regard to any idle reports that may have been industriously circulated, I have nothing to add, but,

'What state, what sex, what excellence of mind,
'E'er found an armour against CALUMNY?
'Give the most monstrous Slander but a birth,
'Folly shall own, and Malice cherish it:
'It moves but my Contempt.

HAVING hitherto, as far as my own recollection, with the assistance of others, has enabled me, delivered to the public an exact and impartial account of every the least important circumstance that occurred during the late unfortunate disputes, I have

to request its indulgence, while I obtrude a few observations on their respective causes; comparing which with the effects they have produced, I make no doubt I shall not only exculpate myself totally from any imputation of obstinacy or disrespect in making no concessions, but prove satisfactorily, that even before the signature of the letter to Mr. Jackson, I was the offended and injured person.

I flatter myself the public will do me the honour to acknowledge, that before this distressing occasion, my demeanour to the audience was at all times marked with the strongest traits of respect and gratitude: my actions were at all times, from a consciousness of rectitude, so open to the eye of observation, and at the same time

so carefully solicitous to deserve and obtain the esteem I wished, that the least shadow of offence never could be adduced against me. My conduct in the interior part of my profession, was at all times attentive; no impunctuality had ever subjected me to reproach. I was anxious to please those whom I had the greatest reasons to respect: from what motives therefore, could I be thought capable of offering offence?---from wantonness? or ignorance?---common sense denies the possibility of the former; and the latter, I flatter myself, my education had prevented.

ADMITTING, therefore, as I hope it must be by all, that I could have formed no premeditated design of offending the audience, my conduct,

when interrupted in the performance of my duty, must have been at that time relative to their own. I came forward in the character of Jaffier; whether or not it was adapted to my abilities, was not my consideration, nor was I to be accounted answerable for assuming it. The part was allotted to me by the manager, and it was my duty to represent it. Why then was I attacked? why was not the manager previously called for by those zealous partizans who imagined Mr. Woods injured by my appearing in a part, which in fact I had not done but in consequence of his refusing it? or upon my demanding my accusation, if I had done wrong, or had been thought to have done so, why had I no accuser? from this, and several consequent circumstances, I am induced to believe, that

the designs of the party (by what motives they were instigated may still remain doubtful) were not so benevolent as their pretence inferred. I am afraid they have succeeded but too much to their satisfaction: they knew the original weakness of their cause, that an unjust prejudice only was the support of it; that it might be strengthened by silently prolonging it, but if too soon revealed, it must inevitably fall.

WHAT opinion could I have formed of a party, of which the first information I received was by means of an anonymous letter, couched in the most illiberal and abusive terms, and whose conduct in the theatre was vulnerating only in concealment? could I have imagined that any party, actuated by honourable

motives, would injure under the shelter of obscurity? or that any one gentleman, whom chance or misrepresentation may have made my enemy, would have sent a letter infamous as the one before alluded to? convinced therefore of the baseness of the design, I pronounced it to be 'a scene of villany;' and called upon the authors, in the presence of that public *they* had insulted, by assuming its signature, to avow themselves. NO ONE APPEARED: whom, therefore, could I offend, but such as were too conscious of deserving the opprobrium to confess themselves in public the supporters of their cause? had there been *one* amongst the few at that time dissatisfied, who could have disowned any concern in the letter, why did not *he* stand forward to explain the

cause of his disapprobation?---my words and actions were open to public examination, and so should have been those of my accusers: but on the contrary, the snake was concealed in the grass; nor could I ever discover it, though it had stung me; ---thus was the persecution carried on for three successive nights, without my knowledge of any one of my persecutors, from whom I might hear my accusation, and to whom I might plead my cause. Misrepresentations prevailed, where the voice of truth could gain no admission, or where, being admitted, it pleaded but too feebly against the roarings of prejudice, to be attended to.---In the court of justice, persecution, where first it should have been crush'd, was nursed by calumny, till it grew too powerful not to over-

whelm me; and then, and not till then, it burst to light: when I had been judged, I first knew my judges: when I had been condemned, I first heard of my accusation: then first I discovered that an explanation of my conduct had been necessary, since it had originated from feelings of which my persecutors had proved themselves entirely ignorant,---the common feelings of humanity!

I CANNOT but reflect with horror on the powerful influence of secret and malevolent insinuations, when I consider that a combination, which was at first promoted by the most despicable of men, the writers of anonymous abusive letters, was gradually by the power of malice and unjust representations increased, till at length it was owned and supported

by gentleman of great respectability in the law.

With what justice any one profession or denomination of men can in a large metropolis arrogate to themselves the sole and exclusive appellation of the public, in absolute contradiction to the sentiments of other professions, and inhabitants much more numerous, and at the same time equally respectable, is not for me to determine; the propriety of it was seen, and the necessity of submitting to it occasioned my withdrawing: but it is incumbent on me to vindicate myself, in refusing to submit to any particular set of men whatever; the peasant claims the same duty from an actor as the lord, being part of the community: are, then, the voices of hundreds, to

drown or over-rule those of thousands? or, are the whims, the prejudices of any set of men, to be the rule of conduct to those whose rank in life entitle them to judge for, and consider themselves at least a part of the public? are the middling class of inhabitants, by far the most numerous, and I may venture to say, the best support of the theatre in this and every other metropolis, are they to be esteemed as nothing, or as people whose opinions are of no importance? it was my duty as an actor to consider the opinions of every rank of men; which having been decidedly in favour of my conduct for three successive nights, gave me reason to conclude, that the public did not conceive themselves treated with disrespect. To the *public*, therefore, who had acquitted me, no

apology was necessary. Why then should the gentlemen of the law, and they only, consider themselves affronted? why should they imagine that the term *villany* applied to them? were they concerned in the letter?

WHATEVER was the cause of this persecution, the effect has been most severely felt. I have been obliged to quit, by a most cruel combination, for ever, a profession, which

> ‘ How I have loved,
> ‘ All my neglected duties of the world,
> ‘ Friends, parents, interest, country, all forgotten,
> ‘ Cry out against me, now I count th’ exchange,
> ‘ And find all barter’d’—

for the most exquisite sensations of anxiety at being even innocently the object which the shafts of malice have not found invulnerable:---but let it not be imagined, that while I am arraigning the injustice of my

persecutors, my sufferings can give rise to an unworthy reflection on the honourable profession of which they are members: it is of the men who signed the letter to Mr. Jackson, and not of their profession, which I must ever respect, that I complain. I am happy to reflect, that amongst the whole profession, one hundred and thirty only could be induced to sign it: some of whom signed it without reading it, and others from the fancied necessity of conforming to what they imagined to be the common cause: how far their wishes are gratified, I cannot tell; but of this I am but too sure, that was their intent to awaken in me a sense of the keenest sufferings of humanity, in that they have succeeded: was their intent to contrast with their own, the avowed opinions

and open actions of my friends, in that they have succeeded: but if it was to increase their credit and respectability, I fear they have not yet arrived at that pinnacle of their ambition. To depress a man who never did them wrong; to support an unjust cause, which originated with the most despicable of men; to attempt to carry by violent combinations, what justice was unequal to the execution of; are not the roads most likely to lead them to honour or approbation: prejudice may for a while repress the dictates of humanity, but it cannot utterly destroy them. If they are, as they pretended to be, the public, under whose auspices merit is to succeed and flourish, why did they seek to crush, or render unworthy of their protection, the object, who, from his

inexperience in his profession, had the most claim to it? or how could they expect from the actor, the expression of those feelings they deny to him as a man? or how can he be taught to represent the injuries of others, when he is insensible of those offered to himself? it is from our own feelings alone we draw the inference of what similar feelings, acted upon by similar causes, will produce in others. If, then, I could patiently have submitted to the insults of individuals, where could they have expected to find the sensibility necessary to depict the images of Jaffier's distress? The sensations of bodily pain, naturally excite exclamations of distress; and shall the nobler part of man, the intelligence of right or wrong, be wounded without complaint? the man that is

the cause of exciting passions in another, productive of unfortunate, but natural consequences, which never could have existed without the provocation, is surely, of the two, the most to blame: as wisely may we say to the lamb, I will wound you, but you shall not bleed,---as to the man of honour, I will insult you, but you shall not reply.

To raise, and not to debase, should be the object of every humane mind. I must confess, the man that dares to rely on his own honour, and the integrity of his conduct, is the least dependent. If such demeanour has deprived me of their countenance, that surely must tend more to their disgrace than my own;---to bend and cringe, have never been the means of success that I have wished

to adopt. I must by upright conduct deserve, or I never will receive favour; and what I originally refused from principle, I never could be induced to grant from fear: to make an apology for an offence I never had committed, seemed to me an act of cowardice. Had I been sensible of having committed an offence, an apology should not have been called for: it should have been voluntarily offered, having ever deemed it more the characteristic of an enlightened and brave mind, to apologize for an offence, than by an ill-judged perseverance, to continue in the commission of it.

I CANNOT take my leave of the public, without feeling and expressing the most heart-felt gratitude for their very indulgent support on this

and every former occasion, regretting most severely the cause which will ever again deprive me of the power of soliciting their patronage in a public capacity, but still hoping to enjoy their undiminished esteem as a private character. If I have been blinded by a too fond attachment to a profession for which I was unqualified, I am young, and may hope forgiveness. The veil is now removed; and I have only to wish it had been torn from my eyes less rudely.

JAMES FENNELL.

WALKER'S HOTEL,
July 24, 1788.